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## **UniverCity changes directors Doug Johnson will leave just before end of two-year term**

*BY DAVID YOUNG  
DavidYoung@coloradoan.com*

Fort Collins-based Univer-City Connections, looking to strengthen the relationship between the city of Fort Collins and CSU, is changing directors.

Doug Johnson, current director of UniverCity Connections, which is focused on facilitating ideas for Colorado State University, downtown and the Poudre River, is handing the reigns to Jim Reidhead on Oct. 29 at a stakeholder event.

The change in leadership comes just before Johnson's two-year term comes to an end.

Reidhead said he is excited to step in and make a seamless transition, picking up where Johnson left off.

"I'm very pleased. I have been involved for a number of years," said 60-year-old Reidhead whose resume boasts an extensive history in Northern Colorado.

While Reidhead was the owner and co-founder of The Cupboard in downtown, a commercial building restoration contractor, director of land planning and marketing with Phantom Canyon Ranch, CSU collaborator and director of the Rural Land Use Center for Larimer County, perhaps his most influential role in regards to UniverCity is project manager for Old Town Associates/E.E Mitchell and Co. It was there he helped manage a team for a renovation and construction project of Old Town from 1981 to 1985.

Johnson points out Reidhead is knowledgeable and respected throughout the community, and when it came time to find his replacement, there wasn't much debate about who it would be.

"When Jim's name came forward, there was an 'ah ha' moment," Johnson said. "And we said, let's make this happen."

Mike Freeman, city of Fort Collins chief financial officer, serves on the executive committee for UniverCity connections. He said Reidhead is a perfect fit based on his relationship with the city and CSU, combined with his extensive involvement with so many downtown issues.

"Everyone supported Jim," he said. "He has great relationships with the city, county and CSU."

Matt Robenalt, executive director of the Downtown Development Authority, said Reidhead was the logical choice for the position.

"I am pleased that Jim accepted the offer to take over for Doug," Robenalt said. "His roots with downtown go back to very early origins of the DDA."

Headed into its fourth year, UniverCity is unique in the respect that most community-driven initiatives rarely survive for so long.

Johnson and Reidhead are quick to attribute that to the more than 100 community volunteers who help keep the organization going.

Reidhead said that's what is great about America is people have the ability to make a difference, and in Fort Collins, they do. Johnson describes UniverCity as a forum where people can shape their own destiny.

"The challenge is it's easy to talk about ideas and concepts; it's much more difficult to implement them," Reidhead said.

UniverCity is working to help facilitate the implementation of new ideas with \$50 billion in capital projects. Some of the key issues for UniverCity include: FortZED green restaurant initiative, UniverCity Connections Homeless initiative and Fort Collins River Map.

In looking back during his time with UniverCity, Johnson simply calls it the "best two years of my life." He said being the first director was a blessing and curse as he had no expectations set on him but also had no benchmarks for success.

Freeman said he appreciates Johnson's hard work and notes there have been successes in many aspects.

Johnson, who plans to go back into the private sector in some capacity, said at the Oct. 29 stakeholder meeting, which is open to the public, they will address a downtown experience project called "getting there is as fun as being there." The idea is to help connect all aspects of the community from the river to trails and alleyways connecting the community.

Reidhead said he will continue to operate UniverCity as an unbiased medium for open debate.

"We need to have an attitude for innovation," he said. "That's the best thing we can bring."